

Item No. 8a.	Classification: Open	Date: 19 November 2013	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Petition – Old Rotherhithe Library and Civic Centre – Comments of the Chief Executive	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		Rotherhithe Ward	
From:		Proper Constitutional Officer	

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Comments of the Chief Executive

1. Over recent years the council has been involved in several rounds of public consultation about the future of Albion Street. The findings from these formed the basis of our policy for the regeneration of the area, as set out in the Canada Water Area Action Plan. Those policy aspirations were further refined into a delivery plan in the Albion Street Project Mandate that was agreed by cabinet in December 2012. The mandate envisaged the library being demolished and redeveloped for housing.
2. Throughout this process the council has worked closely with key local stakeholders, such as the Albion Street Steering Group and the Area Housing Forum, on a number of specific proposals for the area. This partner working has already delivered significant progress including:
 - The establishment of a thriving community shop on Albion Street with a second unit about to be fitted out as a pop-up-shop for use by local groups and business start ups
 - Several successful cleaner, greener safer bids for public realm improvements
 - Expansion of the long established Scandinavian Christmas Faire.
 - The council is supporting Albion Primary School to expand in a new facility to be built on their current site
 - The council is pursuing a compulsory purchase order for the dilapidated and potentially dangerous former public toilets so they can be incorporated into a new pocket park on St Olav's Square
 - Council finance has been identified to purchase the freeholds of three dilapidated and boarded up houses, 71, 73 and 75 Albion Street, and bring them back into beneficial use
 - Options are being explored to move the Albion Street Group Practice into new, fit for purpose accommodation – including incorporating a new surgery on the ground floor of any new build on the library site.
3. The council's focus on partner working is the correct one and is delivering an inclusive and holistic response to the needs of the local community.
4. It is noted that many of the themes the council, along with its partners, is already delivering on, are consistent with the proposal from the Sublime Foundation that is attached to the petition. What is missing from the proposal is a specific set of

outputs that would be delivered along with a business plan and confirmation of funding. There is also no information on the capacity of the group to manage what would appear to be a complex business proposal from a large and costly to operate building.

5. There must therefore be risk that, should the council agree the request to pursue the Sublime Foundation proposal, the group will not have the capacity or resources to deliver. This would be to the detriment of the local community, further delay the benefits of regeneration and would likely result in additional cost to the council.
6. The favoured way forward is for the council to continue with its successful strategy of partner working. This approach could include the Sublime Foundation so giving them the opportunity to test their ideas on a more appropriate scale, with less risk to them, the council and local community. In the meantime the council should continue with its original plan to redevelop the library for much needed new council housing.
7. The proposed scheme for new affordable housing on the site would provide a useful contribution towards the council's aspirations to build 1,000 new council homes by 2020.
8. Southwark is a borough with high levels of deprivation, low median income levels and high levels of housing need. Southwark's Housing Strategy 2009-2016 identified that there is a shortage of affordable homes with the borough. The recent welfare reforms have meant the pressures on the affordable housing supply has increased. The proposals to increase the supply of affordable, good quality homes will benefit households in need from all Southwark's communities.
9. The opportunity for 50% of letting available as a result of the new development to be available to existing tenants living on an estate with an agreed boundary, could also help meet the needs of residents impacted by welfare reform, such as the social sector size criteria.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
ePetition http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/mgepetitionlistdisplay.aspx?bcr=1	160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH	Beverley Olamijulo 020 7525 7234

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Ian Millichap, Constitutional Manager	
Report Author	Everton Roberts, Constitutional Officer	
Version	Final	
Dated	11 November 2013	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Legal Services	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services	No	No
Chief Executive	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		8 November 2013